

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-15 ACDA-10 TRSE-00 SSM-05 IO-13 EUR-12 AF-08
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-----081623Z 096999 /40

P 081442Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4803
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 0962

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: IS, LE, PFOR
SUBJECT: ISRAELI ANTICIPATION OF DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON
WITHIN A FEW DAYS

1. ISRAELI MEDIA REPORTED FEBRUARY 8 THAT SECRETARY VANCE HAS NOT YET RECEIVED A FINAL REPLY FROM THE SYRIANS REGARDING THE SITUATION AT NABATIYAH AND THAT HE ASSURED AMBASSADOR DINITZ FEBRUARY 7 THAT HE WOULD ATTEMPT TO SPEED UP THE PROCESS IN ORDER TO RESOLVE THE DISPUTE SATISFACTORILY. DINITZ WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE U.S. CANNOT GIVE ANY ASSURANCES THAT THE SYRIANS WILL WITHDRAW.

2. THE AFTERNOON DAILIES YEDIOT AHARONOT AND MAARIV BOTH FEATURED MAIN FRONT-PAGE HEADLINES "RISING TENSION IN NORTH, FOLLOWING SYRIAN DODGING OF NABATIYAH"
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ISSUE." OBSERVERS REPORTEDLY BELIEVE THAT DEVELOPMENTS ON THE ISRAELI BORDER CAN BE EXPECTED WITHIN A FEW DAYS' TIME, IN THE FACE OF SYRIAN REFUSAL THUS FAR TO PULL THEIR TROOPS OUT OF NABATIYAH AND VICINITY. IT WAS REPORTED THAT PRIME MINISTER RABIN WILL HOLD CONSULTATIONS TODAY (FEBRUARY 8) TO DISCUSS THE VANCE-DINITZ SESSION. THE SYRIANS HAVE NOT

EVEN BEGUN TO DISARM THE TERRORISTS OF THEIR HEAVY WEAPONS, THUS BELYING THEIR STATED PURPOSE FOR THE NABATIYAH PRESENCE, IT WAS ALSO REPORTED. ISRAELI SOURCES IN WASHINGTON HOPE THAT THE SYRIANS WILL EVACUATE NABATIYAH BY THE END OF THE WEEK, "JUDGING FROM MR. VANCE'S REMARKS YESTERDAY," YEDIDOT REPORTED.

3. DEFENSE MINISTER PERES TOLD REPORTERS YESTERDAY THAT "OUR PROBLEM IS NOT SYRIAN OR LEBANON ALONE, BUT A SET OF RELATIONS WITH THE NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION, WHICH WE WOULD RATHER NOT START OFF ON THE WRONG FOOT." CHIEF OF STAFF GUR TOLD BOND DRIVE DELEGATES THAT NOW IS A TIME FOR DECISIONS AND NOT FOR EXPLANATIONS "A NUMBER OF DECISIONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN MADE AND WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF COMING TO A FEW MORE," GUR SAID WITHOUT FURTHER ELUCIDATION. (MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO) MK GALILI URGED THE LABOR PARTY'S POLITICAL COMMITTEE NOT TO FORMULATE A LEBANON PLANK FOR THE PARTY'S PLATFORM BECAUSE THE SITUATION IN LEBANON MIGHT CHANGE WITHIN A PERIOD OF SOME DAYS.

4. COMMENTING ON THE LENGTHENING DELAY OVER SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM NABATIYAH AND ON ISRAEL'S INITIAL DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE, HAARETZ'S MILITARY CORRESPONDENT (SCHIFF) QUESTIONED THE LARGE NUMBER OF OBVIOUSLY UNCOORDINATED PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY ISRAELI OFFICIALS, WHICH SEEMED TO BEAR THE CHARACTER OF AN ULTIMATUM WITHOUT AN ACTUAL DECISION ON AN ULTIMATUM HAVING BEEN TAKEN. THE UNCLASSIFIED

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MEDIA BEGAN COUNTING THE HOURS UNTIL THE ARRIVAL OF A SYRIAN REPLY, AND IT ALSO BECAME APPARENT THAT WHAT HAD FORMERLY BEEN SETTLED WITH THE WINK OF AN EYE, NOW TAKES LONGER WITH THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. SCHIFF SAID THAT WHILE THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ISRAELI (MILITARY) REACTION IS NOW BEING DISCUSSED, THE EVER-OCCURRING OBJECTION IS THAT ISRAEL MUST NOT SPOIL SECRETARY VANCE'S FIRST TRIP TO THE REGION, TO WHICH GENERAL ATTENTION IS NOW TURNING FOR A SOLUTION. IF THE LEBANESE-SYRIAN RESPONSE TO ISRAEL'S DEMAND IS NOT FORTHCOMING BEFORE VANCE'S ARRIVAL, HE WILL HAVE TO SPEND HIS TIME PUTTING OUT MID-EAST FIRES INSTEAD OF ATTENDING TO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. SPEAKING OF ISRAEL'S MILITARY OPTION, SCHIFF WROTE THAT IT MIGHT BEGIN BY IDF PENETRATION INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON AND TAKING POSITIONS ALONG THE LITANI, WHICH COULD END UP IN CLASHES WITH THE SYRIAN ARMY. EVEN IF THE AFFAIR ENDS PEACEFULLY, HOWEVER THE NABATIYAH LESSON IS THAT AT GENEVA

OR ANY OTHER LOCATION FOR MID-EAST TALKS, ISRAEL
MUST DEMAND THE ENTIRE EVACUATION OF THE SYRIAN
ARMY FROM LEBANON, SCHIFF CONCLUDED.

5. COMMENT: THE TONE OF TODAY'S REPORTS APPEAR
TO REFLECT, MORE THAN IN PREVIOUS DAYS, A GENERALIZED
APPRECIATION OF THE NARROWING OF ISRAEL'S ROOM FOR
MANEUVER. ADDITIONAL COMMENT BY SEPTTEL.
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Message Attributes

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